



SYNOPSIS.

Fran arrives at Hamilton, Gregory's home in Littleburg, but finds him absent conducting the choir at a camp meeting. She repairs thither in search of him, laughs during the service and is asked to leave. Abbott Ashton, superintendent of schools, escorts Fran from the tent. He tells her Gregory is a wealthy man, deeply interested in charity work and a pillar of the church. Ashton becomes greatly interested in Fran and while taking leave of her, holds her hand and is seen by Sapphira Clinton, sister of Robert Clinton, chairman of the school board. Fran tells Gregory she wants a home with him. Grace Noir, Gregory's private secretary, takes a violent dislike to Fran and advises her to go away at once. Fran hints at a twenty-year-old secret, and Gregory in agitation asks Grace to leave the room. Fran relates the story of how Gregory married a young girl at Springfield while attending college and then deserted her. Fran is the child of that marriage. Gregory had married his present wife three years before the death of Fran's mother. Fran takes a liking to Mrs. Gregory. Gregory explains that Fran is the daughter of a very dear friend who is dead. Fran agrees to the story. Mrs. Gregory insists on her making her home with them and takes her to her room. It is decided that Fran must go to school. Grace shows persistent interest in Gregory's story of his dead friend and hints that Fran may be an impostor. Fran declares that the secretary must go. Grace begins nagging tactics in an effort to drive Fran from the Gregory home, but Mrs. Gregory remains staunch in her friendship. Fran is ordered before Superintendent Ashton to be punished for insubordination in school. Chairman Clinton is present. The affair ends in Fran leaving the school in company of the two men to the amusement of the scandal-mongers of the town. Abbott, while taking a walk alone at midnight, finds Fran on a bridge, telling her story by cards. She tells Abbott that she is the famous lion tamer, Fran Nonpareil. She tired of circus life and sought a home. Grace tells of seeing Fran come home after midnight with a man. She guesses part of the story and surprises the rest from Abbott.

CHAPTER XII.—Continued.

"Oh," Grace exclaimed, disagreeably surprised. "I did not know that you play cards, Professor Ashton. Do you also attend the dances? Surely you haven't been dancing and playing cards very long?"

"Not for a great while," responded Abbott, with the obstinacy of a good conscience wrongfully accused.

"Only since Fran came, I am sure," she said, feeling him escaping. She looked at him with something like scorn, inspired by righteous indignation that such as he could be influenced by Fran. That look wrought havoc with the halo he had so long blinked at, as it swung above her head.

"Does that mean," he inquired, with a steady look, "that you imagine Fran has led me into bad habits?"

"I trust the habits are not fixed," rather contemptuously. "I hardly think you mean to desert the church, and lose your position at school, for the sake of—of that Fran."

"I hardly think so, either," returned Abbott. "And now I'd better go to my school work."

"Fran is imprudent," said Mrs. Gregory, in distress, "but her heart is pure gold. I don't know what all this means, but when I have had a talk with her—"

"Don't go, Professor Ashton," interposed Grace, as he started up, "until you advise me. Shall I tell Mr. Gregory? Or shall I conceal it on the assurances that it will never happen again?"

Abbott seated himself with sudden persuasiveness. "Conceal it, Miss Grace, conceal it!" he urged.

"If you will frankly explain what happened—here before Mrs. Gregory, so she can have the real truth, we will never betray the secret. But if you cannot tell everything, I shall feel it

"I believe this concludes our bargain," said Abbott, rising.

Mrs. Gregory was calm. "Miss Grace, Fran told me long ago that she is eighteen years old; she came as a little girl, because she thought we would take her in more readily, if we believed her a mere child."

"Does Mr. Gregory know that?"

"I haven't told him, I don't know whether Fran has or not."

"You haven't told him!" Grace was speechless. "You knew it, and haven't told him? What ought I to do?"

"You ought to keep your promise," Abbott retorted hotly.

"Sitting on that bridge at midnight, alone, telling people's fortunes by cards."

Professor Ashton—Mrs. Gregory! Grace exclaimed, with one of those flashes of inspiration peculiar to her sex, "that Fran is a show-girl!"

Mrs. Gregory rose, and spoke through her mother's ear-trumpet: "Shall we go home, now?"

"That Fran," repeated Grace, "is a show-girl! She is eighteen or nineteen years old, and she is a show-girl!"

"Wouldn't it be best for you to ask her?"

"Ask her? Her? No, I ask you!"

"Let me push the chair," said Abbott, stepping to Mrs. Gregory's side. He read in the troubled face that she had known this secret, also.

The secretary gazed at him with a far-away look, hardly conscious that he was beating retreat, so absorbed was she in this revelation. It would be necessary for some one to go to Springfield to make investigations. Grace had for ever alienated Abbott Ashton, but there was always Robert Clinton. He would obey her every wish; Robert Clinton should go. And when Robert had returned with a full history of Hamilton Gregory's school days at Springfield, and those of Gregory's intimate friends, Fran, with the proofs of her conspiracy spread before her, should be driven forth, never again to darken the home of the philanthropist.

"I would rather wait," said Mrs. Gregory, "and talk to Fran. She will promise me anything. I trust you, Abbott; I know you would never lead my little girl into wrong-doing. Leave it all to me. I will have a good talk with Fran."

"And," said Abbott eagerly, "if we both solemnly promise—"

Grace bit her lip. His "we" condemned him.

"I don't ask you to hide the affair on my account," he said, holding up his head. "I don't want Fran put in an



FRAN

BY JOHN BRECKENRIDGE ELLIS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY O. IRWIN MYERS

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CHAPTER XIII.

Alliance With Abbott.

For the most part, that was a silent walk to Hamilton Gregory's. Abbott Ashton pushed the wheel-chair, and it was only Mrs. Jefferson, ignorant of what had taken place, who commented on the bright moon, and the relief of rose-scented breezes after the musty auditorium of Walnut Street church.

"They were bent and determined on Fran going to choir practice," the old lady told Abbott, "so Lucy and I went along to encourage her, for they say she has a fine voice, and they want all the good singing they can have at Uncle Tobe Fuller's funeral. I despise big doings at funerals, but I expect to go, and as I can't hear the solos, nor the preacher working up feelings, all I'll have to do will be to sit and look at the coffin."

"Mother," said Mrs. Gregory, "you are not cheerful tonight."

"No," the other responded, "I think it's from sitting so long by the Whited Sepulcher."

Mrs. Gregory spoke into the trumpet.

"I was taking a walk to rest my mind," Abbott said slowly, proceeding as if he would have liked to fight his ground inch by inch, "and it was rather late. I was strolling about Littleburg. At last I found myself at the new bridge that leads to the camp-meeting grounds, when ahead of me, there was—I saw Fran. I was much surprised to find her out there, alone."

"I can understand that," said Mrs. Gregory, "for I should have been surprised myself."

Mrs. Gregory turned upon Grace. "Let him go on!" she said with a dash that petrified the secretary.

"When I came up to the bridge, she was sitting there, with some cards—all alone. She had some superstition about trying fortunes on a new bridge at midnight, and that explains the lateness of the hour. So I persuaded her to come home, and that is all."

Mrs. Gregory breathed with relief. "What an odd little darling!" she murmured, smiling.

"What kind of fortune was she telling?" Grace asked.

"Whatever kind the new bridge would give her."

"Oh, then the cards stood for people, didn't they? And the card you dropped in the yard was your card, of course."

"Of course."

"And did Fran have a card to represent herself, perhaps?"

"I have told you the story," said Abbott, rising.

"That means she did. Then she wanted to know if you and she would."

Mrs. Gregory, I have always felt that Fran has deceived us about her age! She is older than she pretends to be!"

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unjust light. She isn't to be judged like other people."

"Oh," murmured Grace, "then you think there is more than one standard of right? I don't. There's one God and one right. No, I cannot consent; what might satisfy Mrs. Gregory might not seem best to me. No, professor, if you feel that you cannot explain what I saw, last night, I shall feel obliged to tell Mr. Gregory as soon as the choir practice ends."

"Didn't Fran refuse to tell?" Abbott temporized.

"Yes," was the skilful response; "but her reticence must have been to save you, for the girl never seems ashamed of anything she does. I imagine she hated to get you into trouble."

"Miss Grace, you have heard Mrs. Gregory say that she trusts me—and she is Fran's guardian. I ask you to do the same."

"I must consider my conscience," That answer closed all argument.

"You had better tell her," said Mrs. Gregory, "for she is determined to know."

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that I'm an impostor. But I told her no tickets are going to be returned. I said—'This show absolutely takes place, rain or shine.'"

"Fran," said Abbott in distress, "I want to talk this over—come here in the yard where you're not so conspicuous."

"Show-girls ought to be conspicuous. No, sir, I stay right here in the glaring moonlight. It doesn't call for darkness to tell me anything that is on your mind, Professor."

"Fran, you can't hold me responsible for what Miss Grace guessed. I tell you, she guessed everything. I was trying to defend you—suddenly she saw through it all. I don't know how it was—maybe Mrs. Gregory can explain, as she's a woman. You shall not deem me capable of adding an atom to your difficulties. You shall feel that I'm your friend 'while we're together and after we part.' You must believe me when I tell you that I need your smile." His voice trembled with sudden tenderness.

She looked at him searchingly, then her face relaxed to the eve of revolution. "Who have you been trying to get a glimpse of, all the times you parade the street in front of our house?"

Abbott declared, "You!" In mute appeal he held out his hand.

"You're a weak brother, but here—" And she slipped her hand into his. "If I'd been in conversation with me, I wouldn't have let her have any presentiments. It takes talent to keep from telling what you know, but genius to keep the other fellow from guessing. What I hate about it is, that the very next time you fall into her hands, you'll be at her mercy. If I told you a scheme I've been devising, she'd take it from you in broad daylight. She can always prove she's right, because she has the verse for it—and to deny her is to deny inspiration. And if she had her way—she thinks I'm a sort of dissipation—there'd be a national prohibition of Fran."

"If there were a national prohibition of Fran, I'd be the first to smuggle you in somehow, little Nonpareil. Isn't it something for me to have taken you on trust as I have, from the very beginning?"

His brown eyes were so earnest that Fran stepped into the shadow. "It's more than something, Abbott. Your trust is about all I have. It's just like me to be wanting more than I have. I'm going to confide in you my scheme. Let's talk it over in whispers." They put their heads together.

"Tomorrow, Grace Noir is going to the city with Bob Clinton to select music for the choir—he doesn't know any more about music than poor Uncle Tobe Fuller, but you see, he's still alive, it will be the first day she's been off the place since I came. While she's away, I mean to make my grand effort."

"At what, Little Wonder?"

"At driving her away for good. I'm going to offer myself as secretary, and with her out of sight, I'm hoping to win the day."

"But she's been his secretary for five years—is it reasonable he'd give her up? And would it be honorable for you to work against her in that way? Besides, Fran, she is really necessary to Mr. Gregory's great charity enterprise."

"The more reason for getting rid of her."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

'While Others Deliberate, Tucumcari Acts.'

TUCUMCARI is the county seat of Quay county, is surrounded by an empire of wealth and is in every way a modern city. All of the churches are represented and most of them have elegant church buildings.

SCHOOLS—The schools of Tucumcari are second to none in the State. We have a modern High School building, costing \$40,000, together with splendid ward buildings. The new County High School will be established and doubtless soon a State Normal.

UTILITIES—The city is supplied with electric lights, with day as well as night service, cement walks, owns a splendid waterworks system; has a fine sanitary system of sewerage, ice plant, cold storage and long distance telephone system.

BUILDINGS—Tucumcari has two of the best bank buildings in the Southwest, blocks of brick business houses, an up-to-date court house, U. S. Land Office, a modern \$40,000 hotel, new Elks' Home, costing \$15,000, Tucumcari Hospital, and hundreds of beautiful residences. There has not been a time in the last five years that there were not buildings in course of construction. A new federal building is being planned and a \$50,000 union station for Tucumcari; also the Home Sanitarium with Tubercular Annex.

CLIMATE—Our altitude is 4000 above sea level, our winters are short and mild and the summer nights are always cool and refreshing. Pure water from deep wells is procured in abundance.

SOCIETY—Our citizenship is composed of the best people from the east, west, north and south and will compare favorably with the personnel of any city. Nearly all of the fraternal organizations are represented and most of them have large and growing memberships, and some of them are planning to build homes of their own.

RAILROADS—Tucumcari has four railroads with a monthly payroll of from \$40,000 to \$50,000. The shops and roundhouse of the E. P. & S. W. are located in the city, and this is the freight and passenger division point of all four roads. Several surveys have been made to the south, and there will soon be another road leading in that direction and giving us connections with the Gulf trade. The Santa Fe railroad from Clovis will probably be built within the next twelve months, and other roads are contemplated. The proximity of Tucumcari to the almost inexhaustible coal supply at Dawson with the Mexico market near, should bring additional factories.

SHIPPING POINT—Statistics show that Tucumcari pays more freight to the railroads than any point between Pratt, Kansas, and El Paso, Texas. During last year 3,500 cars of freight were unloaded to our merchants, and over 600 cars daily were handled through our yards. The wholesale business of the city has gone beyond the \$1,000,000 mark, the retail business has exceeded \$1,250,000, and our banks did over \$12,000,000 worth of business in the ten months from January 1st to November 1st.

FACTORIES—We have a cotton gin, broom factory, bottling works, ice plant, cement block factory, ice cream factory, feed mill, two factories for the manufacture of perforated tile for sub-irrigation, planing mills and creamery. Tucumcari has the best equipped postoffice in the State, has two weekly papers with as fine outfits as can be found in the Southwest. These papers are very liberally patronized by our merchants as will be seen by the pages of advertisements they carry in each issue.

MORALS—The morals of Tucumcari are good, and when this was written the county jail was empty, and this is not the only time Quay county has had an empty jail during the last year.

AMUSEMENTS—The city has a fine opera house, parks and ball grounds, two moving picture shows and other amusements with a Railroad Y. M. C. A. planned for the near future.

QUAY COUNTY—Quay County is bounded on the east by Texas. The drainage is from the Canadian, the Plaza Largo and the Pajarita Rivers.

COST OF LAND—This rich soil can be bought at present at a low figure, and it does not look like a business proposition for a farmer of other states to pay all of his hard-earned money for rent, when he can procure 150 acres of this soil for what one year's rent would amount to.

POULTRY AND TRUCKING—Poultry and trucking pays well in this section. Eggs bring from thirty to fifty cents and poultry is always in demand. There are some small, irrigated garden tracts near the city from which the owners are selling more than a thousand dollars worth of vegetables to the acre.

A Chamber of Commerce with 192 members.

The 25,000 acre Pajarita Irrigation project is on foot and it is expected that actual construction will begin soon.

For further information address Secretary Chamber of Commerce, Tucumcari, New Mexico.

Phone news items to No. 22. It is not possible to get around to each place or to talk to each person, and everyone should know some item which would be of interest and greatly add to the local features of our paper.

Tucumcari Steam Laundry

under the management of a practical laundryman of 20 years' experience. Guarantees satisfaction. All garments repaired and buttons sewed on. Cleaning and Pressing. Phone 192 and we will do the rest.

CHARLES L. MCCRAE
Manager

QUICK WIT PREVENTS PANIC

Natural Aptitude to Grasp a Situation Turned to Good Account on Stage.

Natural aptitude to grasp a situation has been turned to account more than once on the stage, and, in one case, if the veracity of a favorite comedian goes for anything, it saved a panic and possible loss of life.

"We were playing one-night stands," said he, "in Kansas during the terrible period of cyclones, and found ourselves in a large, dilapidated building, called by courtesy, a theater."

The low comedian was on the stage in the part of a drunken husband receiving a vigorous lecture from his wife. "Madam," he had just observed, "if you keep on you'll talk the roof off," when there was a roar heard, followed by a tremendous crash, the building swaying like a tree in a storm. Everybody jumped to their feet, for they saw the roof had been carried away. They were about to turn and make one dash for the exits, when the comedian, com-

ing down to the footlights, looked up into the air, and, quick as a flash, turned to the lady, and said: "There, what did I tell you?"

The audience howled with laughter, and the quick-witted comedian was undoubtedly the means of preventing a serious calamity."

St. Kildan Parliament.

One feature of St. Kildan life would have appealed strongly to Doctor Johnson if he had carried out his intention of spending a winter on the island. "The men of St. Kilda," writes John Sands, "are in the habit of congregating in front of one of the houses almost every morning for the discussion of business. I called this assembly the parliament, and, with a laugh, they adopted the name. When the subject is exciting they talk with loud voices and all at one time, but when the question is once settled they work together in perfect harmony. Shall we go to catch some geese, or ling, or mend the boat today? Such are some examples of the questions that occupy the house. Sometimes disputes are settled by drawing lots."